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UNCLAS KATHMANDU 000717

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SA/INS AND DS/OP/NEA  
ROME FOR FODAG

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: WFP RECEIVES THREAT, HAS FOOD SHIPMENT HIJACKED

1. (SBU) On April 11 the head of security for the UN system in Nepal reported that a World Food Program (WFP) office in Dhamak, Jhapa, in eastern Nepal had a threatening notice, signed by purported Maoists, posted on its door that morning. The translated text of the message follows below:

Begin text:

Notice:

Foreign agents (in the form of INGOs) that have entered Nepal with malicious intentions of making Nepal and Nepalese people corrupt and slaves have been targeted for destruction. Therefore, the house owners are warned not to lease their houses to such organizations. Otherwise, responsibility for any destruction of the property that may take place at any time will go to the owner of the house himself.

Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)

End text of message.

2. (SBU) According to the UNDP in Nepal, local offices of UNHCR, Lutheran World Services, and Caritas in Jhapa received a similar notice. (Note: All of the organizations threatened are active in assisting the over 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in seven camps in eastern Nepal. End note.) Embassy contacted other embassies April 11; none reported that their aid agencies or projects had received similar threats. The security officer at the British Embassy speculated the note may be the work of a local Maoist commander, rather than reflective of a new policy from the center to harass INGOs.

3. (SBU) WFP Deputy Country Director John Prout confirmed to A/DCM that on April 10 a regularly scheduled delivery of WFP Food for Work grain and cooking oil--13.1 metric tons in all--was hijacked, presumably by Maoists, in Bajura District in northwestern Nepal. Prout reported that the food was offloaded from government vehicles belonging to the Ministry of Local Development and transferred to waiting porters to be carried away on foot. No one was hurt and none of the vehicles were damaged. Since the shipment and vehicles did not bear a WFP logo, Prout said he did not consider the hijacking an attack on the organization itself.

4. (SBU) Comment: In the apparent absence of threats to INGOs in other parts of the country, we are somewhat inclined to agree with our British colleague and view the Jhapa warning as the inspiration of a local commander. The hijacking of the WFP shipment in a remote section of western Nepal, on the other hand, was obviously well planned--it's not easy to assemble that many porters on short notice--and could indicate that military efforts to cut off food supplies to the insurgents are working. We will continue to monitor the situation and seek information from NGOs and aid agencies in the field. An EAC meeting is planned for 8:30 a.m. on April 12.

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